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TAGS: [KJUS](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#)  
SUBJECT: A RARE AND VIGOROUS PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE OVER  
HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

REF: A. BAGHDAD 1388  
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 1308

Classified by Deputy Polcouns Steve Walker for reason 1.4  
(d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In another example of increasingly robust parliamentary assertions of oversight under the still new leadership of Speaker Ayad Samarraie, members of parliament slammed the Ministry of Interior for human rights abuses during the Council's June 11 session. Initiated by Sadrists, other MP's, Shi'a and Sunni alike, joined in the chorus of criticism and demanded accountability from the Maliki government for its human rights record. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) During the June 11 parliamentary session, Sadrist MP Falah Hasan Shansal read into the record a report alleging substantial human rights abuses within Ministry of Interior (MOI) detention facilities. The report, submitted by five MPs, accuses the National Police's (NP) 4th Brigade of illegally holding 11 prisoners in a detention facility at the brigade's headquarters in Baghdad. It alleges that these 11 detainees had been tortured and two of them raped by members of the NP while in custody. The report specifically names four MOI employees, calls for their suspension from active duty, and requests that charges be brought against them.

[1](#)3. (C) A number of MPs criticized the MOI and its Minister, Jawad al-Bulani, for failing to adhere to basic principles of human rights. Hasan al-Shimmari, leader of the Fadhila bloc, asserted that interrogations led by the MOI constituted violations of Iraq's constitution. He called for Minister Bulani to appear before a special investigative committee under the leadership of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights. Safia al-Suhail, an independent MP, claimed that the condition of Iraq's detention facilities has deteriorated in recent years as the GOI has begun, for political reasons, to bring back "staff members of Saddam's abusive apparatus." Other MPs, from Sadrists to Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) members, echoed calls for an official inquiry into the matter. A joint committee, comprised of members from the Committees on Security and Defense, Human Rights and Environment and Health, is to be formed to conduct the investigation.

[1](#)4. (C) Sheikh Jalal al-Din al-Saghir, an ISCI member, warned that the detainees' lives would be at risk when the report was made public. He further insisted that parliament had the right to demand that MOI suspend the four officers in question, pending further investigation into the case. Speaker Ayad al-Sammarraie tasked the Parliament's Committee on Human Rights to submit recommendations on how to prevent the recurrence of such incidents of abuse. (Note: In a separate meeting with DCM Ford on June 11, al-Saghir praised CoR Speaker al-Sammarraie and the new ethos of professionalism and discipline within parliament. He also faulted PM Maliki for making appointments based on loyalty rather than qualifications. End note.). Speaker al-Sammarraie concluded that parliament's Presidency Council could take action on some of the report's requests, while

action on others required further investigation by the Committee on Human Rights. (Note: One of the Parliament's leading human rights advocates, Sunni MP Harith al-Ubaidi, was assassinated on June 12, the day following the debate (septel). Another MP colleague of Ubaidy's speculated to Poloff that the assassination may have been a "hit" arranged by the MOI in reaction to his vigorous criticism (Comment: We doubt this conspiracy theory. End comment.) End note.)

15. (C) Comment: Following on the heels of parliament's questioning of former Minister of Trade Abd al-Fadah al-Sudani, which led directly to his resignation (refs A and B), the June 11 discussion on detainee abuse reflects an increased activism among and desire by MPs to exercise their constitutional executive oversight powers. In the past, Parliament has generally limited its oversight to reviewing ministry budgets and ministers' performance. This is the first time MPs have alleged specific human rights abuses, named those responsible, and demanded that they be prosecuted. If sustained, this could herald a new period of parliamentary activism on human rights and effectively press the GOI to take remedial action. End comment.

HILL